

GORBACHEV SPEAKS OF LITHUANIA MOVE

Talks of Using New Power to Impose Moscow's Control on Republic, Tass Says

By ESTHER B. FEIN

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MOSCOW, April 10 — President Mikhail S. Gorbachev said today that he might use his newly strengthened powers to impose Moscow's control over Lithuania as an extreme measure in case of civil conflict there, the official press agency Tass reported.

Mr. Gorbachev did not say under what conditions or how he would assert his new presidential powers to seize control of the republic, where the Parliament declared March 11 that it planned to restore Lithuania's independence. But his statement, made at a congress of the Communist youth league Komsomol, comes a day after he and his new presidential council threatened to take unspecified "economic, political and other measures" against Lithuania.

The chief spokesman for Mr. Gorbachev said at a press briefing today that Moscow had "no intention" of using an economic blockade to press Lithuania. But the spokesman, Arkady A. Maslenikov, suggested that Lithuania could become economically isolated from the Soviet Union because individual enterprises and ministries are already indicating they might not renew contracts with their current Lithuanian partners.

He said the republic could also be forced to pay full price for some crucial goods, like fuel, that it now buys at subsidized rates.

Moscow's Face-Saving Proposal

The Kremlin has repeatedly demanded that Lithuania revoke its declaration of independence and the suspension of the Soviet Constitution as a prerequisite for negotiating the republic's future relationship with Moscow, a condition Lithuanian officials have ruled out.

Mr. Maslenikov said that if Lithuanian legislators are "afraid of losing face" by rescinding their bold declaration, the Kremlin would be prepared to begin talks if Lithuania was willing to proclaim "a kind of moratorium on all these laws," saying they exist "just on paper" but are "not working."

In his comments, Mr. Gorbachev said he favored a referendum to decide Lithuania's future — the first requirement in the new law on secession adopted by the Supreme Soviet, the country's standing legislature.

Lithuanian legislators seem to be

softening lately on the possibility of conducting a referendum, but they show no willingness to follow the Supreme Soviet's prescribed mechanism for secession, asserting that they never legally joined the Soviet Union and, therefore, do not need Soviet permission to leave.

Lithuania and its two Baltic neighbors, Latvia and Estonia, were annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 under a secret protocol to a nonaggression pact between Hitler and Stalin.

In a meeting today with the British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, Mr. Gorbachev emphasized that the situation in Lithuania "is strictly our internal question."

Rules for Emergency Decree

According to a report carried on the main evening television news program, Mr. Gorbachev said it was "the President's duty" to protect the Constitution in the Soviet Union, adding, "This will be done."

But he warned that the problem, which he emphasized "arose through the fault of the Lithuanian leaders," could prove costly to "world peace."

Underscoring that the Kremlin is seriously considering introducing what Soviet law refers to as presidential rule

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in Lithuania, Mr. Maslennikov said that Mr. Gorbachev had "enough prerogative, enough power to use" such a method to gain control in the republic.

Mr. Maslennikov would not provide any details about how Mr. Gorbachev would use his presidential powers. "How he will use it he will decide when he decides to use it," Mr. Maslennikov said, emphasizing that the law establishing the presidency unquestionably gives Mr. Gorbachev such extraordinary authority "to defend the Constitution of the Soviet Union and the rights and interests of Soviet citizens wherever they may live, in Lithuania, in Moscow, or in any other area of this country."

Constitutional amendments approved last month by the Congress of People's Deputies, the full national Parliament, allow the Soviet President to declare a state of emergency in a region of the country "in the interests of safeguarding the security of citizens of the Soviet Union," and to then "introduce temporary presidential rule" there.

The President can declare a state of emergency with the consent of the governing body in the republic involved, or if he does not get consent, he can declare such a state and then "without delay" submit the decision for ratification by the Supreme Soviet, which must approve the ruling with two-thirds of the votes of its members.

'Ultra-Rightist Forces'

Several weeks ago, opponents of independence in Lithuania raised the possibility of giving President Gorbachev control of the republic. In a news conference today in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, one of the leaders of the small pro-Moscow faction of the Communist Party in Lithuania, Vladislav Shved, accused Mr. Gorbachev and the Soviet Government of taking "insufficiently firm and consistent" measures

against the Lithuanian Parliament.

The Lithuanian president, Vytautas Landsbergis, sent a brief telegram to Mr. Gorbachev today, expressing concern that the Soviet leader was being pushed by "ultra-rightist forces," and begging him not to be swayed by them.

Mr. Landsbergis has said the Soviet leadership could at any time artificially create a dangerous or threatening situation in Lithuania that would justify the use of force or the imposition of presidential rule.

Tass said Mr. Gorbachev told the Komsomol meeting that he considered the actions taken by the Lithuania Parliament to be adventurist, but he said he still favored a political resolution to the critical stalemate between the republic and Moscow.

Bush Defends Gorbachev

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TORONTO, April 10 — President Bush and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada today offered a defense of President Mikhail S. Gorbachev as he grapples with Lithuania's effort to reassert its independence, suggesting that the Soviet leader deserved the benefit of the doubt.

After meeting here today, Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Bush repeated their countries' refusal to recognize the annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union in 1940.

Mr. Bush said, as he has before, that he had made it clear to Moscow that violence in Lithuania would hurt Soviet-American relations. But Mr. Bush said the Lithuanian crisis had not prompted him to reassess his positive opinion of Mr. Gorbachev.

"He has demonstrated that he is committed to peaceful change and evolution of democracy," Mr. Bush said at a news conference with Mr. Mulroney before the two men each threw out a pitch to start a baseball game between the Toronto Blue Jays and the Texas Rangers.

Mr. Mulroney concurred, saying that Mr. Gorbachev was "more attractive, more realistic" than his predecessors.

He "appears to be much more in keeping with some, if not all, of the values that we in the West defend," Mr. Mulroney said.